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SUBJECT: MFA Arms Control Raises Old Issues

¶11. (SBU) Summary: On October 14, Ambassador Krol met with MFA Arms Control and International Security Director Alexander Baichorov before Baichorov's trip to the U.S. to participate in the UN First Committee. Baichorov provided the Ambassador with information on a proposed First Committee Resolution on the prohibition of new weapons of mass destruction, reiterated Belarus's desire to become a member of the Zangger Committee, and passed documents on the OSCE project to dismantle conventional weapons in Belarus. In addition, Baichorov relayed to the Ambassador an episode about a Belarusian minister who was invited to the U.S. for a training program, but was immediately recalled by the GOB for failure to receive prior permission to travel to the U.S. The minister blames his own government for this, highlighting the value of continued outreach. End Summary.

GOB Wants No New WMD...

¶12. (SBU) Baichorov passed the proposed Belarusian resolution on the "Prohibition of the Development and Manufacture of Types of WMD and New Systems of Such Weapons." Belarus has attempted to put this resolution on the First Committee agenda for several years, but with no success. Last year the resolution was left off the agenda completely due to a "technical glitch" which Baichorov asserted was a deliberate action of the U.S. He surmised that the U.S. did not want to see the resolution on the agenda, let alone support it. However, Baichorov relayed to the Ambassador that he hoped the U.S. would not obstruct the inclusion of the resolution on this year's agenda. Baichorov even asked the U.S. to consider supporting the resolution on its merits and in recognition of Belarus' sincere interest in combating the development of new WMD technology. [Note: Post understands this resolution subsequently passed.]

¶13. (SBU) Ambassador replied that he had no official position to convey. He added that after Lukashenko made Belarus' official position toward the U.S. quite clear at the opening of UNGA, there is little desire in Washington to support any Belarusian efforts in the U.N. or anywhere else. The atmosphere Lukashenko has created by his hostile statements and actions alone would make it difficult for the U.S. to cooperate with Belarus. [Comment: Now that the resolution has passed, Belarus is likely to portray itself as an ardent proponent of non-proliferation and to accuse the U.S. of being a threat to world peace and security. End Comment.]

...And Zanger Committee Membership

¶4. (SBU) Baichorov presented another non-paper on a different perennial issue - Belarus' desire to join the Zanger Committee. The paper recounted Belarusian Ambassador to the U.S. Mikhail Khvostov's recent meeting on Zanger at the Department, and complained that "US-Belarusian cooperation in the field of nonproliferation is being taken hostage by extraneous issues." The non-paper stressed the GOB supports USG nonproliferation efforts, including PSI. Baichorov further speculated what the U.S. position would be if Belarus actually ratified the Missile Technology Control Regime.

¶5. (SBU) Ambassador reminded Baichorov that the U.S. support for Belarusian membership on the Zanger Committee would probably only come about once Belarus changed its overall policy approach to international cooperation and cooperation with the U.S., including respect for human rights and conducting a responsible arms sales policy. If Belarus had taken steps to improve its record, the USG would have a very different attitude to Belarus' membership on the Zanger Committee and other groups. Baichorov simply smiled.

GOB Seeks Support for OSCE Weapons Destruction Project

¶6. (SBU) Finally, Baichorov shared with the Ambassador a copy of the latest version of the OSCE project to support the destruction of excess SALW in Belarus. Baichorov opined the U.S. delegation to Vienna would support the UK's lead on this project. Ambassador concurred with Baichorov's assessment and added the USG was considering supporting this project through the OSCE since it serves everyone's interest. [Note: Post will report septel on recent problems with this project.]

Reaching Out to GOB Officials Still Useful

¶7. (SBU) As the Ambassador was leaving, Baichorov related to him an episode involving Minister for Emergency Situations Enver Bariyev. Bariyev, who at the time was a deputy minister, had attempted to participate in a U.S. Army sponsored training program in 2004. He traveled to New Hampshire with the rest of his delegation only to receive an urgent phone call from Minsk informing him that he did not have permission from on high to travel to the U.S. With great embarrassment, Bariyev had to turn right around and fly out that very day. [Comment: Bariyev does not fault the U.S. When Bariyev greeted a recent U.S. Department of Energy delegation, he was most cordial. This episode and Bariyev's reaction demonstrate the usefulness of reaching out to GOB officials and letting the leadership take the blame for rejecting engagement. End Comment.]

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